

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MILAN 2723

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SUBJECT: BOLZANO: ANOTHER WORLD

SUMMARY: ETHNIC POLITICS PREDOMINATE IN PROSPEROUS PROVINCE
OF BOLZANO, WOUTH TYROL, WHERE COMMUNISTS GAINS AROUSE LESS
PASSION THAN INCREASED TENSION BETWEEN GERMAN AND ITALIAN
COMMUNITIES.

1. CONGEN MET PRINCIPAL PROVINCIAL NON-COMMUNIST LEADERS
DEC. 13 AND 14 TO EXAMINE SITUATION SINCE JUNE 20 ELECTIONS.
IN THAT CONTEST, CONSERVATIVE GERMAN LANGUAGE SOUTH TYROL
PEOPLES PARTY (SVP) GAINED SLIGHTLY TO ALMOST 60 PERCENT OF
VOTE BUT ITALIAN DC DROPPED TWO SEATS IN PARLIAMENT LOSING 2
POINTS FROM 1972 WHILE CONSERVATIVE LEADER FLAMINIO PICCOLI
LOST ALMOST HALF HIS PREVIOUS PREFERENCE VOTE. COMMUNISTS
ALMOST DOUBLED VOTE TO SLIGHTLY OVER 10 PERCENT WHILE PSI
REMAINED ABOUT STATIONARY AT 5 AND ONE HALF PERCENT. NEW GERMAN
LANAGUAGE SOCIALIST SLATE GOT 2.2 PERCENT OF VOTE, DOWN
FROM MORE THAN DOUBLE THAT IN 1973 REGIONAL ELECTIONS.

2. CONVERSATIONS IN BOLZANO BEGIN WITH ETHNIC ISSUE AND
PROCEED TO RISE OF COMMUNISTS TO CONCLUDE, MUCH LATER, WITH
NOD TOWARD VERY PROSPEROUS ECONOMY.

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3. COMPARED TO PREVIOUS IMPRESSIONS, OBSERVER SENSES INCREASED
TENSION BETWEEN GERMAN AND ITALIAN COMMUNITIES AS ITALIAN
RESENTMENT GROWS AT BEING PUSHED TOO FAR AND SVP LEADERS DRIVE
FOR LAST DROP OF BLOOD. ALTHOUGH SVP HAS WON ALMOST EVERYTHING
IT HAS ASKED FROM ITALIAN GOVERNMENT TO MAKE BOLZANO PRACTI-
CALLY SELF-GOVERNING ENCLAVE, LEADERSHIP THIRST FOR MOE. EVEN

GERMAN LANGUAGE CONTACTS BELIEVE THAT PROVINCIAL PRESIDENT, ONE LEGGED SILVIUS MAGNAGO, IS GOING TOO FAR. THEY CONTENT THAT CONSERVATIVE SVP LEADERSHIP IS HAVING INCREASING TROUBLE IN MONO-POLIZING GERMAN ETHNIC VOTE AS MAJOR AUTONOMIST BATTLES WON. FACED WITH WIDELY DIFFERING INTERESTS AMONG GERMAN VOTERS ON OTHER LOCAL ISSUES, MAGNAGO SAID TO NEED OUTSIDE CONFLICT TO HOLD GERMAN LANGUAGE VOTE TOGETHER.

4. THIS HYPOTHESIS GIVEN SOME CREDIBILITY BY MAGNAGO DURING CONVERSATION IN WHICH HE STORMED AT ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT FAILURE TO PAY OUT SHARED REVENUE DUE BOLZANO. DISBURSEMENTS NOW TWO YEARS IN ARREARS AND PROVINCE FORCED TO BORROW AT 19 PERCENT INTEREST TO PAY FOR OPERATIONS OF GOVERNMENT. MAGNAGO ARGUED THAT ITALY RESPONSIBLE UNDER DEGASPERI-GRUBER TREATY TO PROVIDE FUNDS. HE DIDN'T CARE WHAT GOI DID WITH OTHER PROVINCES, WHICH SIMILARLY BEING STARVED FINANCIALLY, BUT BOLZANO WAS GUARANTEED FUNDS BY INTERNATIONAL TREATY AND HE INTENDED TO GET THEM OR MAKE INTERNATIONAL CASE AGAINST ITALY FOR ITS DEFAULT. (CONGEN CAUTIONED THAT INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WOULD NOT UNDERSTAND SUCH A MOVE BY MAGNAGO AT MOMENT THAT GOI BEING URGED TO REDUCE BUDGET DEFICIT.)

5. ITALIAN CONTACTS, INCLUDING MAYOR, INSISTED THAT GREAT PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE IN PAST 15 YEARS BUT THAT ITALIANS STILL DID NOT FULLY ACCEPT THEIR ROLE AS MINORITY. SOCIALISTS WERE RESENTFUL AT SVP REFUSAL TO DEAL WITH THEM AND AT SVP POLICY OF STUDIOUSLY IGNORING ITALIAN PARTIES AS WELL AS ITS REFUSAL TO ALLOW BILINGUAL OR INTERGRATED GERMAN-ITALIAN LANGUAGE SCHOOLS.

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6. THIS SVP APPROACH REFLECTED, TOO, IN ENERGETIC SUPPORT FOR RURAL RESIDENTS WHO ARE OVERWHELMINGLY GERMAN AND IN ITS OPPOSITION TO EXPANSION CITY OF BOLZANO. RESEVOIR OF CONSERVATIVE SVP POWER LIES IN SOUTH TYROLIAN FARMERS NOW BENEFICIARIES OF VERY GENEROUS SUBSIDIES TO HELP KEEP THEM UP ON THE FARMS.

7. SIGNS OF DIVISION IN SVP EVIDENT IN 1973 REGIONAL ELECTION WHEN GERMAN SPEAKING SOCIALIST GROUP RAN TICKET GETTING ABOUT 5 PERCENT IN PROVINCE. WHILE IT DROPPED TO HALF IN JUNE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION, MAGNAGO STILL ANGRY AT BETRAYAL OF GERMAN SOLIDARITY WHICH HE CLAIMS COST SVP A FOURTH SEAT IN ITALIAN CHAMBER. NOW DEBATE IN PROGRESS WHETHER SVP SHOULD TOLERATE OTHER GERMAN LANGUAGE PARTIES. MAGNAGO ADAMANTLY OPPOSED. OTHER, INCLUDING POWERFUL GERMAN SPEAKING PRESIENT OF MANUFACTURERS, DISAGREE AND FAVOR GREATER DIVERSITY. BACKERS OF LATTER APPROACH ARGUE THAT OTHERWISE, SVP DISSENTERS WILL GO TO ITALIAN LANGUAGE PARTIES LIKE PCI OR PSI WITH RESULTANT DILUTION OF GERMAN POLITICAL MODERATION.

8. GROWTH OF COMMUNISTS IS CONCERN TO ALL. WHILE NUMBER REMAINS SMALL, GROWTH CONTINUES AND HAS NOW SPREAD TO PURELY ETHNIC GERMAN AREA. WHEREAS IN PAST MANY VILLAGES REPORTED NOT A SINGLE PCI VOTE, NOW IT HAS WON VOTES IN EVERY SINGLE TOWNSHIP IN PROVINCE. PCI HAS MADE ITSELF INCREASINGLY A GERMAN LANGUAGE PARTY--AN APPROACH THAT DD HAS ESCHewed AND PSI ACCEPTED ONLY THIS YEAR. MAGNAGO CLAIMS TO EXPECT MAJOR PCI ATTACK ON SVP POINTING TO FAVORED TREATMENT GIVEN BY PCI TO ANDREA MASCAGNI IN NEWLY WON SENATORIAL SEAT AND TO RE-ELECTED DEPUTY SERGIO DECAINERI.

9. BOLZANO SOCIALISTS SUPPORT CRAXI AND CALL FOR EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT INCLUDING COMMUNISTS. PROVINCIAL SECRETARY AND DEPUTY DEFENDED WORKING WITH COMMUNISTS AND REJECTED IDEA OF RUNNING IN COMPETITION WITH PCI ALTHOUGH THEY CONTEND PSI IS MORE DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

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10. WHILE ITALIAN TRADE UNIONISTS SPOKE OF LOOMING (BUT FUTURE) HARDSHIP, EVEN THEIR PRIMARY CONCERN IS RELATIONS WITH SVP AND BITTERNESS AT ITS CLOSED DOOR POLICY TOWARD DEALING WITH ITALIAN COMMUNITY.

11. IMPRESSIVE, JUDICIOUS, MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD GERMAN LANGUAGE BISHOP WORRIED ABOUT UPSWING IN TENSION BETWEEN TWO GROUPS AND PRIMARILY CRITICAL OF GERMAN ELEMENTS FOR STIMULATING ITALIAN REACTION. HE WARNED THAT THERE WERE AUSTRIAN SOURCES FOR SOME OF NEW TENSION AND CONDEMNED CONSERVATIVE WING OF SVP FOR PUSHING ITALIANS TOO FAR. WHILE CLEARLY IDENTIFYING WITH SVP HIMSELF, HE SPOKE FAVORABLY OF IMPROVED COHESION OF DC AND OF LOCAL COMUNIONE AND LIBERATION MILITANTS ALTHOUGH REJECTING THEIR FUNDAMENTALIST CLERICALISM.

12. ENTIRE PROVINCE ENJOYING CONSIDERABLE PROSPERITY WITH BUMPER ORCHARD AND GRAPE CROP, GOOD YEAR FOR GRAZING, FULLY EMPLOYED INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY AND VERY PROSPEROUS TOURIST SECTOR. ALTHOUGH FOREIGN INVESTORS ARE SAID TO BE BRINGING IN NO NEW CAPITAL AND ARE TRYING TO AMORTIZE EXISTING PLANT RAPIDLY, ECONOMY IS DOING VERY, VERY WELL.

13. IN SUM, NEW ELEMENT IN SOUTH TYROL IS UPSWING IN ETHNIC TENSION AND AGGRAVATION OF DIVISIVE FORCES WITHIN GERMAN LANGUAGE SVP. THUS FAR THESE DIVISIVE FORCE BOTH WITHIN PROVINCE AND WITHIN SVP HAVE NOT BECOME A MAJOR PROBLEM. WE MAY BE SEEING ONLY UP-SWING OF SECULAR VARIATION IN TENSION. BUT THIS ISSUE, NEVERTHELESS, STANDS OUT AS 1977 DRAWS TO CLOSE.FINA

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